DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 891 JC 030 570

TITLE	Expanding Post-Secondary Capacity in the North Fraser/Fraser Valley. Douglas College Report to the Ministry of Advanced Education.
INSTITUTION	Douglas Coll., New Westminster (British Columbia).
PUB DATE	2003-05-28
NOTE	14p.; "Updated June 3, 2003."
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://iresearch.douglas.bc.ca/pdfs/reports_eval_plan_docs/FraserCapacity.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Degrees; *Access to Education; Articulation (Education); Community Colleges; Community Size; *Population Growth; Population Trends; *Transfer Programs; Transfer Students; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Douglas College BC

ABSTRACT

This report from Douglas College, British Columbia, to the Ministry of Advanced Education addresses the rapid population growth in the Fraser Valley, and the ways in which this growth impacts Douglas College, University College of the Fraser Valley, Kwantlen University College, and Simon Fraser University. The Douglas College service area is expected to have a population growth of approximately 20% between 2001 and 2011. The schools are already beginning to experience a shortage of FTE capacity. The report offers information on current physical expansion plans to increase student capacity. The report also discusses transfer capacity issues. A follow-up survey of Douglas College graduates found that 10% of respondents were not in their first choice transfer university, 10% were not in the program they wanted, and 15% did not get all the courses they wanted in their fist semester. Because of Simon Fraser's limited capacity, GPA requirements for transfer students are pushed up, and as a result, fewer capable students are able to complete the baccalaureate degree. Among the suggestions for solutions is that of offering third-year courses at Douglas College. The paper also suggests that Douglas College might offer General Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing credentials, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. (NB)

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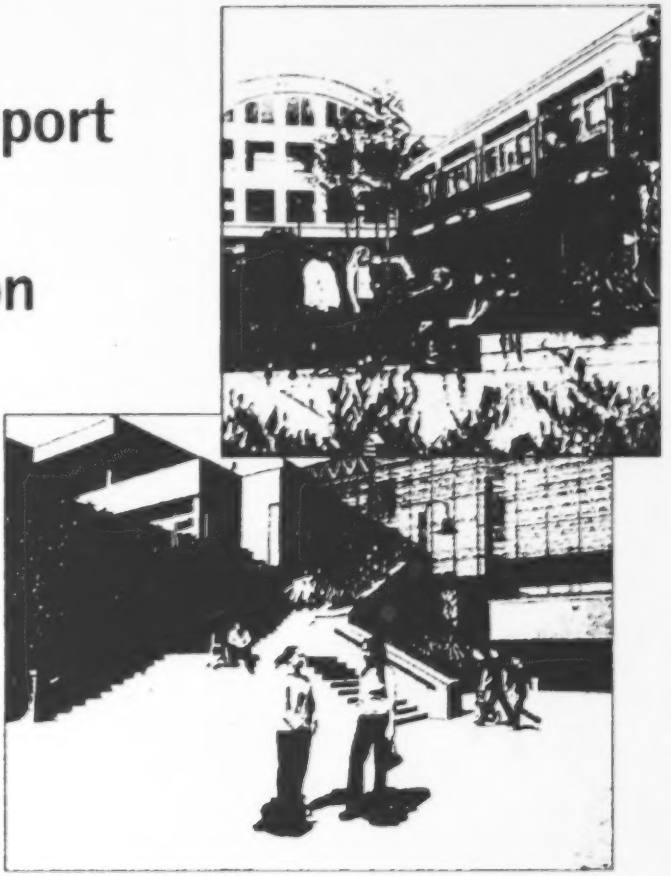
Expanding Post-Secondary Capacity in the North Fraser/Fraser Valley

Douglas College Report to the Ministry of Advanced Education



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Douglas College

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Contents

Access to Post-Secondary Education: Collaborative Solutions	5
Responding to Rapid Population Growth in the Douglas College Region	6
Fig. 1 Fraser Valley post-secondary regions	6
Fig. 2 Municipalities in the Douglas College region	6
Fig. 3 Population Growth by College Region	7
Fig. 4 Undergraduate FTEs - 2003 Service Targets	7
Expanding Physical Capacity	8
New Westminster Campus	8
Fig. 5 New Westminster Campus	8
David Lam Campus, Coquitlam: Phase II	8
Fig. 6 David Lam Campus	9
The Challenge: University Transfer Capacity Problems	10
Access to University Programs: Some Possible Solutions	10
Block Transfers	11
Third-Year Courses at Douglas College	11
Applied Degrees	11
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	12
Bachelor of Health Science - Psychiatric Nursing	12
Applied Degrees in the Future	12
Expanded Transfer Arrangements	12
Towards a Ten-Year Education Plan	13
Fig. 7 Douglas College Participation Rate	13
Recent Planning	14
Summary	15

Expanding Post-Secondary Capacity in the North Fraser/Fraser Valley

Douglas College Report to the Ministry of Advanced Education

Access to Post-Secondary Education: Collaborative Solutions

Douglas College welcomes the opportunity to work with the Ministry and our three post-secondary partners to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our growing communities.

Addressing the rapid population growth in the Fraser Valley has been a concern of the Ministry and the post-secondary institutions for over two decades. The last major study on the topic was the Fraser Valley Access Report of 1990. That study was a collaborative project undertaken at the Ministry's request by Douglas College, Fraser Valley College (now University College of the Fraser Valley), Kwantlen College (now Kwantlen University College), and Simon Fraser University. The Fraser Valley Access Report set the tone for cooperation that would allow us to grow to meet the needs of our burgeoning populations. As we renew that commitment of cooperation, the focus is now on seeking solutions for the next 10 years. The solutions need to be collaborative among SFU, UCFV, Kwantlen University College and Douglas College because the challenges are too big for us to deal with as individual institutions.

Responding to Rapid Population Growth in the Douglas College Region

The official Douglas College region covers Burnaby and New Westminster in the west through the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody) to Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge in the east. These are some of the fastest-growing municipalities in British Columbia.

Fig. 1 Fraser Valley post-secondary regions

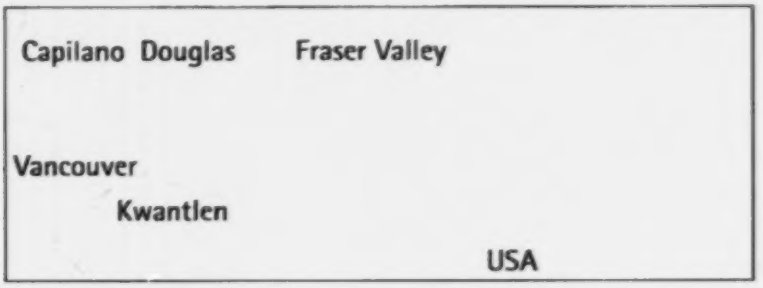

Fig. 2 Municipalities in the Douglas College region

Provincial government figures show that the Douglas College region is one of the fastest growing college regions in BC.

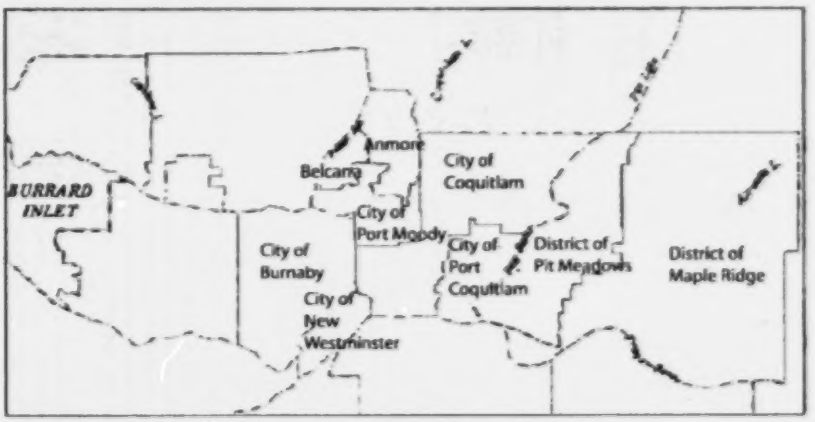

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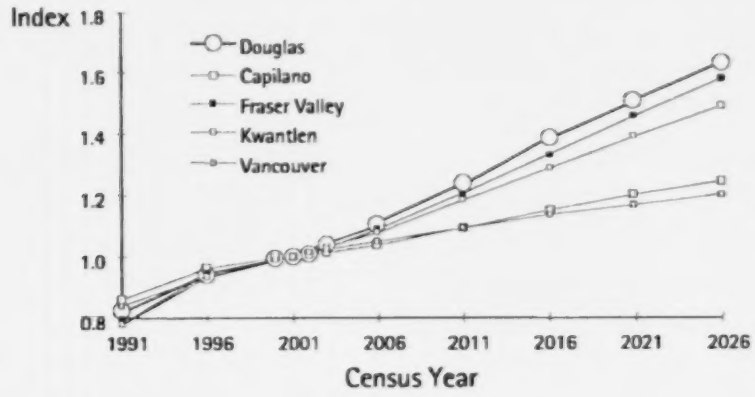
Fig. 3 Population Growth by College Region

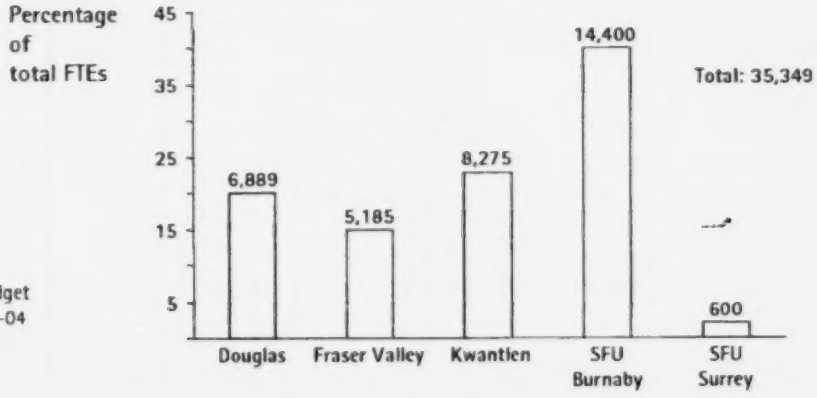


Source: BC STATS, PEOPLE 26 Model, Population Section

The graph above (Fig. 3) shows that the Douglas College region is expected to grow by over 20 percent from 2001 to 2011. Compounding this pressure is the large population growth in the adjacent South Fraser region, portions of which have excellent public transit access to our New Westminster campus using SkyTrain. Almost one-fifth of our students come from the South Fraser.

These population projections are familiar to post-secondary planners as is the current level of service our institutions are providing.

Fig. 4 Undergraduate FTEs - 2003 Service Targets



Source: Ministry Budget letters 2003-04

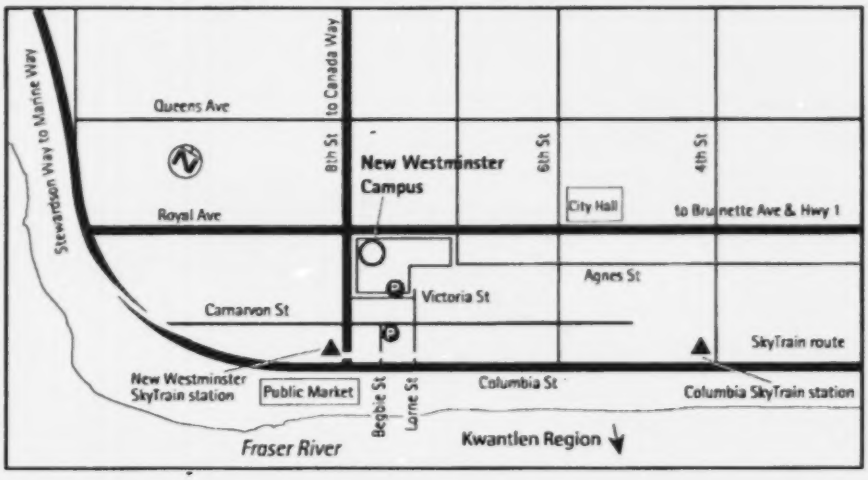
Douglas College provides almost 20 percent of the undergraduate FTEs provided by our institutions.

Expanding Physical Capacity

New Westminster Campus

Although we are currently adding fifth and sixth floors to a small portion of the New Westminster campus, our problem now is that the facility is full. To deal with this, we are exploring the possibility of entering into a partnership to acquire land that is currently available adjacent to our New Westminster campus. But our main strategy for the last few years has been to provide more courses at our David Lam campus so students in Coquitlam and farther east don't have to travel all the way to New Westminster. For example, we opened a summer semester at the David Lam campus two years ago and all seats filled before registration closed. Douglas College runs a trimester operation throughout the year at both campuses.

Fig. 5 New Westminster Campus



David Lam Campus, Coquitlam: Phase II

The population served by the David Lam campus is growing especially fast. For example, Coquitlam's official community plan calls for 24,000 people to be accommodated in the Burke Mountain region which is currently undeveloped land located a little east of the David Lam campus. (To put this growth in perspective, 24,000 is considerably more people than currently live in Cranbrook, Port Alberni, or Prince Rupert.) Although private development has not yet been approved, the Ministry of Education gave the school district the approval in May 2003 to acquire land for a secondary school that is slated for construction in 2005/06.

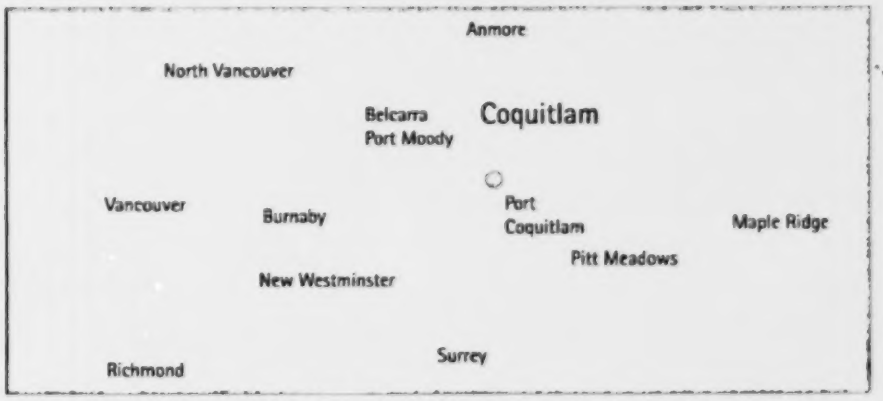
The David Lam campus was built in the Coquitlam City Centre with the understanding that a SkyTrain station would be located within a five minute walk of the campus. In May 2003, both the Greater Vancouver Regional District and TransLink passed motions to fund their share of the Coquitlam extension in conjunction with the construction of the Richmond - Airport - Vancouver line. The SkyTrain will provide improved transportation for students attending the David Lam campus and provide a direct transit link to our New Westminster campus.

In 1995-96, the current David Lam campus was designed and built for two phases in quick succession. Not only do we own the land for a second phase, but the first phase already contains much of the infrastructure for expansion, i.e. the library, cafeteria, student services, and mechanical systems were built to accommodate growth. When we start Phase II, we will be able to build classrooms and offices for 3,000 FTE in the most economical way possible. This building will be the cheapest way of housing more students. It's a significant step in the short term.

We've begun putting funds aside for Phase II. We can still do some expansion in the summer semester, but during fall and winter semesters, both campuses are operating at well over 100% of the Ministry's expected utilization rate. Our key to College development is to get David Lam Phase II built sooner rather than later, both to absorb the growth from the northeast sector, Coquitlam to Maple Ridge, and also to relieve the pressure on New Westminster. Given its location immediately adjacent to North Surrey, students' ability to travel, and excellent public transportation, the New Westminster campus will continue to accommodate a portion of the South Fraser student demand. The sooner we build David Lam Phase II to free up space in New Westminster, the better.

The plans for Phase II have been endorsed by Ministry officials in the past. The issues have been timing and funding.

Fig. 6 David Lam Campus



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The Challenge: University Transfer Capacity Problems

We would like to provide a little data about the cracks that are starting to emerge from a transfer system that is lacking FTE capacity. All of us are familiar with the rising GPA requirements and the studies SFU has coordinated for the university system of qualified applicants who are not granted admission, so instead we are going to look at a different indicator of emerging problems – the experiences of apparently "successful" transfer students who enrolled in another institution after leaving Douglas College.

The 2002 student outcomes survey asked former students who continued their studies after leaving Douglas College about their transfer experiences. Ten percent of these Douglas respondents said they were not in their first choice of institutions, 10 percent were not in the program they wanted, and 15 percent did not get all of the courses they wanted in their first semester. While these results don't portray a perfect transfer system, one might argue they are not too bad.

However, if we dig below the surface, some cracks start to emerge. When we look at Douglas College students who transferred to SFU, our main transfer destination, 15 percent didn't get the program they wanted and 24 percent missed one or more courses. These results are not so good.

Let's dig even deeper and look at a specific group of students, Douglas' Commerce and Business Administration students. Overall, across all transfer destinations, 27 percent of our Business students reported not being accepted into the program they wanted at their new institution, and 16 percent missed one or more courses. Of those who transferred to SFU, a whopping 36 percent were unable to get the program they wanted.

There are undoubtedly a variety of factors behind these statistics, and we realize that a single, easy solution does not exist. The point is simply that the transfer system that has served so well for so many years is increasingly stressed. It needs to figure explicitly in our discussion of the Fraser Valley access issue.

Access to University Programs: Some Possible Solutions

The topic of university transfer programs leads us to challenges requiring innovative solutions where partnerships and close collaboration are required. The most pressing issue is the limited capacity for our transfer students to enter the third and fourth year at other institutions. We're hoping there will be solutions that not only help our students, but which help provide critical masses in upper-level specialties at campuses south of the Fraser.

SFU is our big transfer destination, and we figure prominently in each other's enrolment patterns. However, we're all aware of the limited capacity of SFU to absorb more transfer students, and the consequential rising GPA requirements that limit the ability of competent students to complete a baccalaureate degree.

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To provide a sense of scale, Douglas College has around 2,000 FTE students in Arts. Not all of them are going to transfer, nor do all transfer students go to SFU – but that's a big group of students. In comparison, SFU has a total of about 3,300 FTE in lower-division Arts. (This number includes direct entry students to SFU, as well as transfers from any number of colleges.) The point is that while transfer students at colleges are not especially visible, there are already a great many of them at Douglas College and other institutions. If we're not careful, transfer destinations could become a more significant problem in the Lower Mainland.

Douglas College can play a significant role in relieving the demographic pressures in first and second year, but our students need assurances that there will be a degree program into which they can transfer. Rather than only sending more students up Burnaby mountain, we have a number of students for whom transfer south of the river may be entirely appropriate. We'd like to explore the entire range of transfer possibilities.

Block Transfers

There are some things we've learned about transfer that may help shape our plans. One is that when we can make it work, both faculty and students really like block transfers. The Associate Degree permits block transfer, and while the unexpectedly high rate at which Douglas College students have adopted this credential has caused some complications between Douglas College and SFU, they're challenges brought on by success and growth. Let's learn from this and see what other block transfer arrangements we can develop. We already have some good transfer arrangements in business programs to Kwantlen and block transfers in computing and social services to UCFV which give us a good foundation to build on.

Third-Year Courses at Douglas College

Douglas College already has the curricular depth, student numbers and faculty expertise in selected areas to offer third-year courses. We have begun discussions with Kwantlen and UCFV. We wonder if there may be a few areas where one of the university colleges needs to gain a critical mass to offer a degree, and having Douglas College students transfer into fourth year (i.e. 25 percent residency requirement) might just be part of the solution.

Applied Degrees

Douglas College is not looking for university college status, and our immediate plans for applied degrees are quite modest: new credentials in General Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing to meet provincial priorities.

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Douglas College is well established as a major provider of nursing education in BC. With the government decision to require all new general nursing graduates to have a degree by 2005, the current licensing requirements, and the government's New Era commitment to graduate more nurses, it only makes sense that nursing students from the North Fraser region should complete their credential where they begin it and not have to travel farther for their final year to complete the remaining three semesters of study.

Bachelor of Health Science - Psychiatric Nursing

Similarly, employers are demanding higher credentials for psychiatric nurses. For many years, Douglas College has been the principal institution in Western Canada, providing a Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Psychiatric Nursing. We have been in a partnership with OLA since 1992 offering the BHSc in Psychiatric Nursing and since we teach 90 percent of the program now, we would like to become fully responsible for the program by granting the degree.

Applied Degrees in the Future

Continuing to build on our strengths, we expect that over the next few years we will offer selected applied degrees in business or social services as we respond to the needs of employers, professional bodies and government.

Expanded Transfer Arrangements

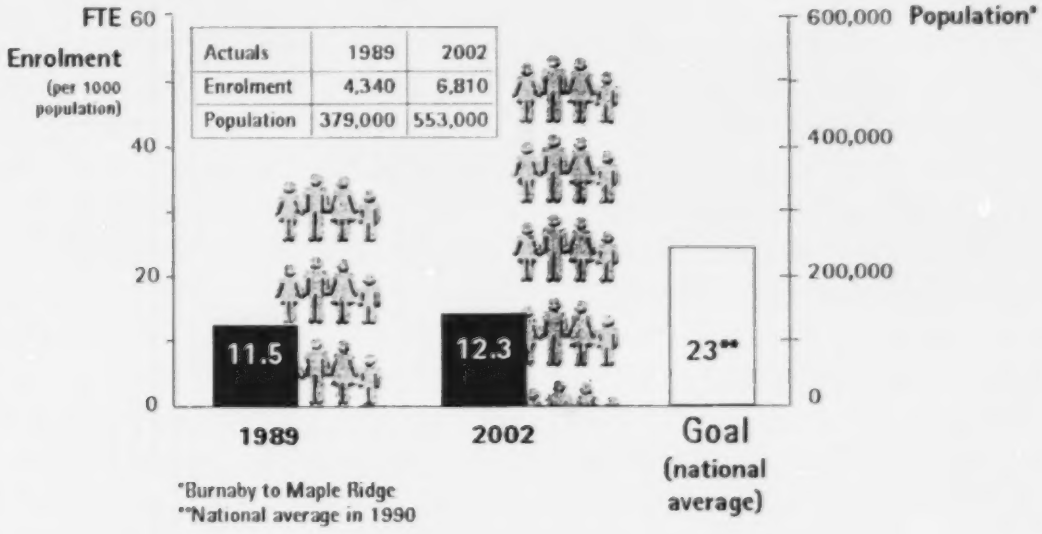
Already, we're starting to experience frustrations associated with the lack of transfer opportunities, and people wanting us to offer our own baccalaureate degrees. We thus see it as critical to arrange expanded transfer arrangements with sister institutions if Douglas College is to continue to operate under the community college model. More of the traditional transfer options are undoubtedly part of the answer, but there may be new transfer arrangements that could well serve Douglas College students while letting Kwantlen University College, University College of the Fraser Valley and Simon Fraser University do some things that they couldn't do so easily on their own.

Towards a Ten-Year Education Plan

Each institution has been asked to specify its plans for meeting the Fraser Valley enrolment access needs. It's a sensible request, but one that turns out to be a bit of a dilemma for Douglas College.

If we go back to the 1990 Access Report as a baseline, the data show that while Douglas College enrolment has grown considerably in the last five years, the population in our region has grown almost as rapidly [Fig.7]. We're essentially just treading water.

Fig. 7 Douglas College Participation Rate



Our goal (as stated in the Access Report) towards meeting the national average for participation was to double our FTEs per 1000 population, a goal which today would entail adding another 6,000 to 7,000 FTEs. Given today's financial climate and the enrolment needs in other parts of the Fraser Valley, we don't see Douglas College growing by 6,000 FTEs any time soon. Nevertheless, it is a useful benchmark in understanding the needs and how Douglas College determined a decade ago that we could best contribute to meeting our region's educational needs.

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Recent Planning

Given the funding constraints for the last three years, we have limited our expectations for growth. Indeed, last year we made a few program cuts, and our Master Education Plan of 1999 talks about modest growth in the order of 250 to 300 FTEs annually (mostly building on, and reconfiguring, existing program strength).

Our dilemma has been to reconcile the huge demand with the modest amount of seats that we were likely to supply.

To resolve the dilemma, we have been trying to focus expectations on the 3,000 FTEs for David Lam Phase II (plus considering the possibility of a partnership allowing for some expansion in New Westminster). Our David Lam facility requirements from 1999 indicate the intention to grow in the areas of Arts, Business and other disciplines that need only general purpose classrooms.

We have not asked for specific updated plans as to what Phase II should house because we have had to manage expectations. But we strongly believe – and this discussion gives us reason to hope – that we must now dedicate our planning efforts to building Phase II of our David Lam campus in Coquitlam.

To put this capital construction in perspective, the Coquitlam school district alone (in which our David Lam campus is located), has opened four new secondary schools since the Fraser Valley Access report was written (Riverside, Terry Fox, Gleneagle, Pinetree), is constructing another one (Heritage Mountain), has done major renovations at two others (Centennial, Port Moody) and did a major conversion of a junior high to a senior high (Best). David Lam Phase II looks quite modest in this educational context.

In a nutshell, Douglas College sees itself adding another 4,000 FTEs over the next decade towards meeting the Valley's post-secondary needs. We would certainly like to see a portion of these added in collaborative transfer arrangements with each of the other three institutions.

Summary

For the next ten years, Douglas College will continue to grow as a comprehensive community college offering a wide range of career, developmental and university transfer programs. We will build on our strengths in health sciences, business, human services, and developmental education, as well as UT arts and sciences. We will also continue to be responsive to worker shortages and the need for quick response training.

Our current priorities for new programs are the bachelors programs in Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing.

Recent discussions with the Ministry indicated that we should plan for an average growth of 400 FTEs per year from 2005-2006 to 2015-2016. As we look forward and try to reconcile the planning we've done in recent years at Douglas with the changes in our external environment, the following represents a rough estimate of our long term FTE growth:

- 35 percent in the Arts and Sciences, assuming we introduce some third year courses
- 15 percent in Applied Degree programs
- 35 percent in certificate and diploma programs in applied fields
- 15 percent in access and developmental programming.

What happens in any one or two year period might be quite different, but we believe this distribution gives a reasonable sense of how our institution might best develop in the long term. We look forward to working with our post-secondary partners to provide our communities with a wide range of high-quality educational opportunities.

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